

Who are the S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie?

We are an organization of over 1500 fisherman who are united to improve fishing and the fishery of Lake Erie.

A group of friends who were fishermen that were unhappy with fishing and the fishery of Lake Erie founded us in 1981.

For over twenty-five years we have pursued this endeavor. To help attain our goals of a better fishery, we communicate with Federal, State and Local Legislators, Administrators, and Officers, Staff and Commissioners of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Our influence and advice has spread all the way across Lake Erie into Canada. They have all come to know and respect the S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie.

We are active members in organizations such as the Northwest Pennsylvania Sportsmen's, Coalition, the Great Lakes Sportfishing Council, the Presque Isle Partnership, the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writer's Assoc., Great Lakes United, the Erie County Environmental Coalition, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's Co-operative Nursery Program, NW PA Sportsmen' Coalition and the Penna. Lake Erie Watershed Association.. All of these memberships put the club in a unique position to help promote our mission and goals.

Fishing Regulations were of great concern to our founding members who felt that the fish populations were being over harvested and they worked diligently to influence the changing of fishing regulations on Lake Erie for both the sport and commercial fishermen.

These regulations limited the size of the fish harvest on Lake Erie. The reduction in the harvest effectively supported the increase in fish populations. In 1994 more regulations came into effect that banned the use of gill nets on Lake Erie. Recently the S.O.N.S. supported size restrictions and reduced creel limits on yellow perch. These restrictions remained until September of 2005 when the size restrictions were removed and the creel limit was raised to 30 because the yellow perch population reached an apparent stable level. The Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie are now producing a significant perch harvest.



Fish stocking and hatching became the next priority beginning with the stocking of 7 million walleye fry into the waters of Presque Isle

Bay. The fry were provided by the PFBC. In 1985 a state grant was provided to the S.O.N.S through the Erie Western PA Port Authority for the construction and operation of a fish hatchery on Presque Isle Bay. Since its completion, the hatchery operated by S.O.N.S. members have produced through the PFBC Co-Operative Nursery Program over 16 million walleye and 15 million perch that were stocked into Presque Isle Bay. Over a million steelhead fry have also been produced in co-operation with the 3-CU Trout Club. The Steelhead are raised to a legal size by 3-CU and stocked into Lake Erie tributary streams.

Public Access fishing opportunities became the next concern of the S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie. The club was originally was dedicated to the support of the "Bucket Fisherman". These anglers are shore fishermen who do not have the luxury of owning a boat. During the early 1980's private interests owned most of the property along Erie's bayfront and prohibited access to these areas. There were several plans to develop this land from industrial to

residential use. This required changes in the zoning of these properties. The S.O.N.S stepped in and convinced Erie City Council to develop a Waterfront Zoning Plan. The zoning ordinance was written with portions that required any new development in this area to provide a 12 foot wide walkway along the water's edge that would be open to the public for walking, biking and fishing. This plan is still in effect today.



Boat launch facilities were in deplorable condition along Erie's waterfront. With the cooperation of the City of Erie and the EWPPA, S.O.N.S.

volunteers reconstructed boat-launching docks at the foot of Chestnut St. and the foot of East Avenue. They also provide new lighting and porta johns at Chestnut St. The PFBC provided new docks and the S.O.N.S. funded the construction of new pilings to support the docks The City and the EWPPA improved these areas further as grants and monies became available. The S.O.N.S provided input during the design process.



Adopt a Stream program in 1991 along Cascade Creek which flows through Frontier Park into the City of Erie. The Creek was a source

of sediment and pollutants into Presque Isle bay. A partnership was formed with the Strong Vincent High School biology department, which studied the stream water quality. The first step was the placement of rip rap stone into the creek and other bank stabilization structures to control erosion. This project valued at \$80,000.00 was accomplished by contributions of materials and equipment from private contractors, grants and

even labor by the Strong Vincent students. More work was completed through 1993. In 1992 the stream water quality had improved to a point that it was stocked with trout for the first time in over a hundred years. The stocking, stream monitoring and clean continues as an annual project until today. Most recently the S.O.N.S contributed money in partnership with the PA DEP for bank restoration on the west branch of the creek.



Adopt A Park was a 1993 project taken on by the S.O.N.S on a

small parcel of land at West 8th and Bayfront Parkway. This property was landscaped and planted. A large stone was placed in the park as a memorial to our first president, Bud Winschell. A large "Welcome to Erie's Bayfront" sign was constructed in the park. Another similar park was constructed at the intersection of Wayne St. and the Bayfront Parkway through efforts of the S.O.N.S. The S.O.N.S. park at W.8th and the Bayfront Parkway has been honored for its beauty by the Garden Club.



Constructing Fish Habitat became another activity in 1995. We partnered with the PFBC

and Presque Isle State Park and constructed 56 fish habitat structures in Presque Isle Bay. The Bay is basically a flat bottom body of water that is devoid of any remarkable structure that can offer protection to the smaller fish. These structures are designed to protect these fish from their predators. This project continued

for 5 years and 270 structures were built and placed in the Bay. During 2005 an artificial reef was constructed using stone supplied by the S.O.N. and equipment and manpower furnished by PFBC and the DCNR in the bay. Our most recent project was the construction of 18 structures with help of students from the Bayfront Center for Maritime studies which were placed in the East Canal basin under the Harold Smith fishing pier.



Educating our youth has been a priority of the S.O.N.S. since the club was organized in 1981. We have

been teaching kids fishing techniques throughout our 25 years of existence. We do this throughout the year at many events including Fish for Free day, Discover Presque Isle days, Harbor Fest, the Youth Summit which is attended by over 800 area school students. We also partner with Presque Isle State Park staff and present a four-day fishing clinic for the Millcreek Township Summer recreation program. We also have supported other educational programs financially through grants and outright purchases. We sponsored over 800 student subscriptions to the P.L.A.Y.(Pennsylvania League of Angling Youth Program) and distributed them to City of Erie school kids. We initiated a fishing tackle loaner program in cooperation with the Erie County Library. This tackle is provided free of charge to interested kids who can loan it out as they would a library book. We granted \$1000.00 to BCMS for their programs. \$2500 was given to the Presque Isle Partnership to purchase canoes and kayaks for an outdoor adventure program. Each year we offer a \$500 grant to a college student for

work-study at our hatchery. We funded \$5000 to build aquariums into the Tom Ridge Center for studying fish that are native to Lake Erie. We provided computer equipment to the Erie History Center for exhibits on Erie's commercial fishing industry and maritime past. We sponsored 3 pages in the Times News Education program. We provide information to our members by inviting guest speakers to our general meetings and publishing a monthly newsletter.



Water Safety is a serious concern of the Sons of Lake Erie. We purchased and provided life rings for placement along the waters of Presque Isle

State Park. More life rings were supplied to the Erie Police Department to be carried in the patrol cars that work in the waterfront district. We furnished cold-water rescue suits to the Erie Fire Dept. and the Presque Isle State Park Rangers. We purchased a radar unit and marine radios for PFBC patrol boats. Through our urging the Erie Fire Dept. instituted a water rescue diver unit that is staffed by trained fire fighters who are on duty 24/7. We furnished diving equipment and a step van to transport it. We persuaded the state legislature to amend existing laws to allow rescue divers the use of blue lights as do volunteer fire fighters when responding to emergencies. We furnished the blue emergency lights along with the Wal Mart Corp.



Handicap Access is a concern of ours. There were 2 barriers to on wheel chair access on the South pier of the channel into Presque Isle Bay. We purchased and installed a steel bridge over one of the barriers. Carrera Steel Co. constructed an ADA

accessible ramp at the other with some of the materials supplied by the S.O.N.S. We gave a grant of \$5000 to the Presque Isle Partnership for the construction of a handicapped accessible fishing pier. We donated another \$5000 to build a handicapped accessible ramp on the North pier.

As you can see, the S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie have been busy, and involved trying to improve our fishery and access to it. We have come a long way, but still have far to go and we need YOUR help to get there. With your help and support we pledge to continue our fight for the improvement of our Pennsylvania fishery.

Our meetings are held on the 4th Monday of the month from September through May at 7:30 pm at the Polish Falcons Club, 431 E. 3rd St. Erie, PA.

Questions 814-453-2270

Email sonslakeri@aol.com

For more info go to sonsoflakeerie.org

Join today!

**Mail the application to: S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie
PO Box 3605
Erie, PA 16508**

Membership fee per year

- Adult \$5.00 Seniors \$4.00
- Junior under 16 \$3.00

Name _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____



P.O. BOX 3605 ERIE, PA 16508

We Are The S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie Fishing Club

S.O.N.S. Is Acronym for "SAVE OUR NATIVE SPECIES"

A 501 C (3) not for profit organization

Mission: To enhance fishing and the fishery of Presque Isle Bay and Lake Erie

Purpose: Promote fishing for the "Bucket" fishing person and free public access for fishing and boating recreation

Goals:

- Improve water quality and a clean environment
- Improve sport fishing through stockings of yellow perch, walleye and other species
- Develop artificial structures/reef for fish habitat
- Provide handicap fishing opportunities
- Promote fishing, safe boating and sportsmanship
- Work to provide beautification projects along our streams and by-way

